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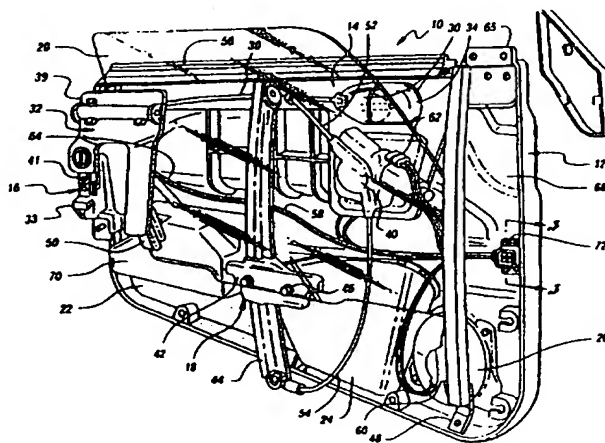
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(54) Title: MOTOR VEHICLE DOOR MODULE



(57) Abstract

A door assembly (10) is disclosed for a motor vehicle. The door assembly (10) comprises a molded door panel (12) having a first side and a second side (22). The first side of the door panel is adapted to face into a passenger compartment of the motor vehicle. The second side (22) of the door panel supports a belt line reinforcement (14), a lock and catch assembly (16), and a window lift assembly. The door assembly (10) of the present invention is adapted for joining with a door exterior.

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MOTOR VEHICLE DOOR MODULE

Technical Field

This invention relates to automotive doors,
and more particularly to a modular motor vehicle door
5 assembly.

Background Art

Automotive doors normally include sheet metal
inner and outer door panels, an interior trim panel
which faces into the passenger compartment, and various
10 hardware situated between the panels. Conventionally,
these components of the door have been assembled at the
same time and place. To decrease the time and
complexity of assembling the entire door, recent
proposals have been made to construct some of the
15 hardware as a unitary subassembly. This subassembly can
then be joined with the remainder of the door at any
given place and time.

U.S. Patent No. 5,355,629 to Kimura et al.,
for example, shows a door for a vehicle that is
20 assembled by joining three modules together to
facilitate the assembly process. U.S. Patent No.
4,648,208 to Baldamus et al. shows an automobile door
with a unit carrier on which built-in units, especially
a complete window winder with window pane, can be
25 preassembled. U.S. Patent No. 4,882,842 to Basson et
al. shows a modular trim panel unit with the preassembly
of the interior trim panel for the door including one or
more basic mechanical and/or electrical components.

However, it has remained a goal to develop a
30 design which decreases the time and complexity of the
automotive door assembly process.

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Summary of The Invention

The present invention is a door assembly for a motor vehicle. The door assembly comprises a molded door panel having a first side and a second side. The first side of the door panel is adapted to face into a passenger compartment of the motor vehicle. The second side of the door panel supports a belt line reinforcement, a lock and catch assembly, and a window lift assembly. The door assembly of the present invention is adapted for joining with a door exterior.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a door assembly of the type described above which is formed of molded plastic.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a door assembly of the type described above which simplifies the automotive door assembly process.

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a door assembly of the type described above in which the electrical components can be tested prior to assembly with a door outer panel.

These and other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention are readily apparent from the following detailed description of the best mode for carrying out the invention when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description Of The Drawings

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of a door assembly according to the present invention for the right hand side of a motor vehicle;

FIGURE 2 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the door assembly for the left hand side of the motor vehicle;

FIGURE 3 is a perspective view of a belt line reinforcement and door window frame subassembly;

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FIGURE 4 is a perspective view of the belt line reinforcement and door window frame subassembly connected to the door assembly;

5 FIGURE 5 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 5-5 in Figure 1 of a self-aligning, self-docking electrical connection of the door assembly;

FIGURE 6 is a perspective view of the door assembly showing a method of attachment to a door outer panel;

10 FIGURE 7 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the door assembly showing an alternative method of attachment to the door outer panel;

15 FIGURE 8 is a perspective view of an injection molded door trim panel and a belt line reinforcement prior to assembly of any components to the door trim panel;

20 FIGURE 9 is a perspective view of a compression molded door trim panel, a belt line reinforcement, a latch reinforcement and a speaker reinforcement prior to assembly of any components to the door trim panel;

25 FIGURE 10 is a perspective view of a glass reinforced urethane door trim panel and a molded-in belt line reinforcement;

FIGURE 11 is a perspective view of a closed cell foam watershield for use with the door assembly;

30 FIGURE 12 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the door assembly with the watershield in place;

FIGURE 13 is a cross-sectional view taken along line 13-13 in Figure 12;

FIGURE 14 is an exploded perspective view of an exterior lock and handle assembly;

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FIGURE 15 is an exploded rear perspective view of the exterior lock and handle assembly;

FIGURE 16 is a perspective view of the mostly assembled exterior lock and handle assembly;

5 FIGURE 17 is a perspective view similar to Figures 6 and 7 and showing an alternative method of attaching the door trim panel to the door outer panel;

FIGURE 18 is a perspective view of another alternative embodiment of the door assembly;

10 FIGURE 19 is a perspective view of still another alternative embodiment of the door assembly;

FIGURE 20 is a perspective view of still another alternative embodiment of the door assembly;

15 FIGURE 21 is a perspective view similar to Figure 17 and showing another alternative method of attaching the door trim panel to the door outer panel; and

FIGURE 22 is a cross-sectional view of the door assembly shown in Figure 21.

20 **Best Mode For Carrying Out The Invention**

With reference to the drawings, the preferred embodiments of the present invention will be described. Figures 1 and 2 show a door assembly 10 according to the present invention for a motor vehicle. The door
25 assembly 10 comprises a base door trim panel or substrate 12, a belt line reinforcement 14, a lock and catch assembly 16, and a window lift assembly 18. The base door panel 12 is preferably a unitary, injection molded piece comprising an olephenic thermoplastic such
30 as polypropylene which is relatively rigid after curing, an engineered acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene (ABS), or a glass-reinforced composite.

The base door panel 12 has a first or front side and a second or back side 22. The front side is



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adapted to face into a passenger compartment of the motor vehicle, and may include as attachments or integral parts thereof an arm rest, a bolster, a map pocket 24, a cloth applique or other trim finish, any
5 lights or reflectors, power switch controls, a speaker compartment 26 and a speaker grill, and an aesthetic carpet.

The belt line reinforcement 14 provides increased structural rigidity to the door panel 12, and
10 in particular provides a structure against which a side window glass 28 can be loaded, a function normally provided by the same structure which is conventionally part of the door inner. The belt line reinforcement 14 may either be formed integrally with the door panel 12,
15 or separately formed as a metal stamping or casting for attachment to the back side 22 of the door panel. In the latter case, the belt line reinforcement preferably comprises steel, magnesium, an engineered plastic or any other material with sufficient structural properties.
20 Figure 3 shows another alternative embodiment in which the belt line reinforcement 14' is integrally formed with or welded to a window frame or header 29, while Figure 4 shows the belt line reinforcement and window frame subassembly attached to the door panel 12.

The lock and catch assembly 16 includes a door inner handle 30, a lock assembly 32 and a catch assembly 33. The door inner handle 30 slides into place within a door handle housing 34 formed in the door panel 12 or separately provided and attached to the door panel. A
30 metal bracket attaches an exterior handle assembly 39 to the door panel 12. The catch assembly 33 is secured to the door panel, preferably with three fasteners such as screws 43. Lock release rod 41 extends between the keyhole of the lock assembly 32 and the catch assembly
35 33, while lock release rod 45 extends between the lock

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assembly and the exterior handle assembly 39. A cable 38 connects the door inner handle 30 to the lock assembly 32, as is well known. The lock and catch assembly 16 uniquely combines anti-theft, lock mounting and glass edge guides functions into one unit.

Figures 14-16 show an alternative embodiment 100 of the lock and exterior handle assembly. The assembly 100 includes an alternative embodiment 101 of the metal mounting bracket which attaches the assembly to the belt line reinforcement. Unlike its counterpart shown in Figures 1 and 2, the bracket 101 does not include glass run guides as described below. A cover or carrier 102 has a flange 103 with holes 104 that engage, preferably by snap fit, projections 105 on the bracket 101. Arms 106 and 107 respectively extend through vertical slots 108 and 109 in the carrier 102, through an adhesive-backed seal 110 provided on the carrier, and out through slots 111 and 112 in a sheet metal door outer 113 for snap fit attachment to exterior handle 114. To secure the arms 106 and 107, pin 127 extends through projections 128 on the rear side of the carrier, through a hole in the arm 106, through spring 129 and a holes in the arm 107, and mates with a pin 130.

Lock release rod 41 is attached at its upper end to hole 115 in a lock cam 116, and at its lower end is attached to a projection 117 on door latch 118. Similarly, lock release rod 45 is attached at its upper end to a hole 119 in arm 106, and is attached at its lower end to projection 121 on the door latch 118. Fasteners 122 extend through respective slots 123 and 124 in the carrier 102 and seal 110 to secure the unit 100 as a subassembly, and snap into holes or slots 125 in doghouse brackets 126 attached to the outer panel 113 to secure the unit 100 to the outer panel. After the trim panel 12 is attached to the outer panel, the handle



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114 is snapped onto arms 106 and 107, and a lock cylinder 127 inserted through corresponding holes in the door outer 113 and the carrier 102, and into engagement with the lock cam 116.

5 Referring again to Figures 1 and 2, the window lift assembly 18 includes a motor 40, a generally horizontally oriented regulator 42, and a generally vertically oriented guide member 44 for the window regulator. The motor 40 is attached to the door panel
10 12, preferably by snap fit, and the window glass 28 is secured into a groove in the regulator 42 by one or more fasteners 46. The window glass 28 is supported by glass run channels or edge guides 48 and 50, each of which includes a weather seal. The guides 48 and 50 are
15 either integrally molded with the door panel 12, or formed as separate metal or plastic pieces and fastened at their lower ends to the door panel 12 or to an extension of the belt line reinforcement, and at their upper ends to the belt line reinforcement 14. It should
20 be understood, of course, that a motor is not required for manual operation of the window glass.

The regulator 42 thereafter moves the window glass up or down when the motor 40 alternately draws cables 52 and 54. A belt line glass seal or sweep 56
25 attached to a flange on the belt line reinforcement 14 generally adjacent the top of the door panel 12 provides an additional weather seal. A water management sheet 68, preferably formed of plastic such as polyethylene, polyurethane or a closed cell foam, inhibits the
30 introduction of water, noise and dust from the interior of the door into the passenger compartment.

Figure 18 shows an embodiment 500 of the door assembly including a scissors-type or arm-and-sector window lift assembly. A window lift motor 502 has a
35 right angle drive which drives a toothed member 504

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either clockwise or counterclockwise about a pivot point 506. The toothed member 504 is fastened to or integral with an extension 508, which at its distal end includes a roller 510. The roller 510 rides in a track in a regulator 512 fastened to the bottom of the window. A similar roller 514 also rides in the regulator track, and is connected to a cross member 516 pivotally connected at 518 to the extension 508. The opposite end of the cross member 516 includes a roller 520 that rides in a stationary horizontal track 522. The track 522 may be fixed to the door panel, formed as an extension of the assembly that includes the motor 502, or fastened at its opposite ends to the belt line reinforcement. As the motor 502 drives the toothed member 504 clockwise, the regulator 512 ascends and the window 28 is raised. As the toothed member 504 turns counterclockwise, the regulator descends and the window is lowered.

Figure 19 shows an embodiment 600 of the door assembly including a dual regulator window lift assembly. Two spaced apart regulators 602 and 604 ride on guide members 606 and 608, and engage the bottom of the window 28. A window lift motor 610 draws a continuous cable 614 in opposite directions to respectively move the regulators 602 and 604 and the window up or down along the guides 606 and 608.

Figure 20 shows an embodiment 700 of the door assembly in which the catch assembly 733 is allowed to float on the door panel 712. Prior to assembly with the outer panel, the catch assembly 733 is suspended by the lock release rods and other attachments which allow the catch assembly a small amount of movement relative to the door panel 712. This feature allows the door inner and outer panels to be brought together without the need for precisely locating the catch assembly 733 relative to the outer panel. For final assembly, fasteners



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extending through holes 750 secure the belt line reinforcement 714 to the outer panel, and fasteners extending through holes 752 secure the catch assembly 733. The door panel 712 may also be secured to the door
5 outer by fasteners, ultimately concealed by appliques 754, engaging receivers 756. A door grab 758 is also provided which is attached for strength to the belt line reinforcement 714.

Figures 21 and 22 show an embodiment 800 of
10 the door assembly in which the door panel 812 is loaded to the outer panel by first locating guides 806 and 808 above corresponding mounting receivers in the outer panel, and then pivoting door panel 812 about its lower
15 end as indicated by the arrow in Figure 22. The door panel 812 is thereafter lowered into place, by gravity or otherwise, such that a male electrical connector 872 described more fully below vertically engages a female
20 electrical connector 874 as indicated by the arrows in Figures 21 and 22. The door panel 812 is thereafter secured to the outer panel by any method described herein.

In any of the embodiments of the present invention, a secondary seal can be provided around the perimeter of the engagement between the door inner and
25 outer panels. The seal can be formed with a seal gun, or a separately applied peel and stick seal can be used. Any form of the seal has the additional advantage of isolating the door inner to minimize the occurrence of squeak and rattle.

Referring again to Figure 1, a wiring harness
30 58 carries electrical current to all necessary components, and includes plug-in connectors such as speaker connector 60, regulator connector 62, power lock connector 64, and connectors for any power mirror
35 connected to flange 65. The harness 58 is attached to

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the door panel 12 as necessary, preferably by positioning some or all of its length within channels or hooks molded into the door panel or the belt line reinforcement. Door side impact components, such as a foam block 70 or an air bag, may also be secured to the door panel 12.

A male section 72 of a self-aligning and/or self-docking electrical connector may be mounted proximate the hinge side of the door panel 12 shown in Figure 1. Figure 5 shows the electrical connector comprised of the male section 72 mounted to the door panel 12 and a female section 140 mounted on a door outer panel 200. The male section 72 consists preferably of four spring-loaded contacts 142 having semi-spherical surfaces 143 located in a mounting plate 144 within a box 120. The female section 140 consists of the same number of inverted semi-spherical or crown shaped receptors 146. The receptors 146 can be made of beryllium copper alloy (BeCo) or other suitable material, and can be connected to a traditional electrical connector in the body of the motor vehicle. During assembly, the installer simply translates the box 120 relative to the adjacent female section 140 until correctly positioned. At this point, the contacts 142 automatically fall into the receptors 146, thereby facilitating an electrical connection. A locator pin (not shown) can be provided in addition to the spherical contacts 142. The connector 72 shown in Figure 1 can be mated with an electrical extension 76 shown in Figure 4 as part of the door panel 12, or alternatively the extension 76 can be separately provided as part of a sheet metal door exterior for connection to the connector 72 as shown in Figure 6. Further details of the connector 72 can be found in U.S. patent application filed August 28, 1996 and titled Self-Aligning and Self-



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Docking Electrical Connector, assigned to the assignee of the present invention and hereby incorporated by reference. Instead of the electrical connector section 72, the harness 58 may be provided with a conventional pass through 78 including a seal 66 integral with the harness at the door-to-body pass through point to inhibit water seepage into the door cavity, as shown in Figure 2.

The assembled door assembly 10 is adapted for joining with the sheet metal door exterior by bringing it adjacent the door exterior, and locating the electrical connector section 72 with its mating section if so provided of the door exterior. The door assembly 10 is attached to the door exterior at the belt line with either a plurality of bolts or screws, or by separate plastic fasteners or fasteners integrally molded with the door panel, and finally securing the door assembly 10 around its periphery. One significant advantage of the door panel of the present invention, however, is that its electrical components can be tested prior to assembly with the door outer panel.

The assembly sequence for the structural door of the present invention is as follows. First, the base door panel 12 is placed on a conveyor for off line assembly, and the water management provisions are added. The belt line reinforcement is then attached to the base door panel, if not already formed as an integral part thereof. The door side impact components are then attached, after which the door inner handle is slid into place and secured and the lock subassembly is secured with the three screws. The electrical wire harness is then positioned, and the connectors are attached to positions near their respective components. The lock electrical attachment is then completed. The door regulator is then positioned and snapped, screwed or

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bolted into place, the cables routed and the guide secured and the electrical connection made. Next, the left and right door glass edge guides are positioned and secured at the top and bottom, and the door glass seals are attached into the guides.

The speaker is then snapped or screwed into the door panel, and the grille cover snapped over the speaker and the electrical connection completed. The exterior handle adapter subassembly/theft prevention bracket is then attached and the rods for lock release are attached to the lock. The belt line glass seal is next pushed onto the belt line flange. The door glass is then located in the glass edge seals and located to the regulator guide and secured with the fasteners. Finally, the mirror is installed using three studs with the mirror and attaching three nuts and a foam seal. A power or mechanical mirror cable is routed and connected, if necessary.

An alternative assembly sequence is to first snap fit the interior handle bezel 30 onto the base door panel 12, and then fasten the map pocket on the base door panel. Next, the base door panel is rotated 180 degrees so that the back side 22 faces upwardly, and the map pocket is glued, screwed or ultrasonically or vibrationally welded in place. The base door panel is then unloaded from the conveyor and placed in a vertical orientation, and the belt line reinforcement is added. Contemporaneously or immediately thereafter, the speaker, speaker grille, foam and wire harness are added. After the wire harness is routed, the interior handle lock cable 38 is added. The electrical connections are then made, and the glass run channels added. The window regulator is then positioned and electrically connected. A pull cup is snapped into the door panel arm rest, and any necessary electrical



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connections such as for power windows are made. Finally, the window glass is added and connected to the regulator.

Figure 6 shows one alternative for attaching the door panel 12 to the door outer panel 200. As shown by the arrow, a latch housing 202 of the door panel 12 is first inserted through an opening 204 in the door outer panel 200, and the female electrical connector 140 is aligned with the male connector on the door panel 12. To partially secure the door panel 12 to the outer panel 200, a series of bolts or other fasteners are then inserted through horizontally-aligned holes 210 and 212 in the door panel 12 and outer panel 200, respectively. A bottom portion 213 of the window regulator guide extending generally below the periphery of the door panel 12 may be seated in an indentation 215 formed in the door outer panel to assist locating the panels relative to each other.

Figure 7 shows another alternative for mounting the door panel 12 to an outer panel 200'. As shown by the arrow, the door panel 12 is inserted straight into the door outer panel 200' such that a latch flange 214 fits into a notch 204' formed in the outer panel and the electrical extension 76 aligns with notch 206. Diagonally-aligned mounting holes 210' and 212' are provided in the panels 12 and 200', respectively, and thereafter the panels are secured together as described above. The window regulator guide portion 213 may again be seated in the indentation 215 to assist this loading.

Figure 17 shows another alternative build in which a door panel 12' is located by the portion 213 cooperating with indentation 215 in outer panel 200''. The door panel 12' is then secured with fasteners including screws 250 inserted generally normally to the

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plane defined by the door panel 12' and screws 252 inserted generally parallel to the plane of the door panel through flange 254 and into a portion 256 of the door outer panel.

5 The base door panel 12 is either injection molded, compression molded or formed of a glass-reinforced urethane (GRU). Figures 8, 9 and 10 show the
10 back side of alternate door panels 12 formed respectively by each of these methods. In Figure 9, a combination speaker reinforcement and map pocket 300 and a latch reinforcement 302, both preferably injection
15 molded, are provided. In the GRU door trim panel of Figure 10, the belt line reinforcement 14 is molded in so that only a flange 304 is exposed.

15 Figure 11 shows a watershield 400 for use with the door assembly of the present invention. The watershield 400 is preferably formed from a polyethylene, polyurethane or a closed cell foam, and is
20 sealed, as least in part by means such as an adhesive bead 402, over certain of the door panel components as shown in Figures 12 and 13.

25 It should be understood that while the forms of the invention shown and described above constitute preferred embodiments of the invention, they are not intended to illustrate all possible forms thereof. It should also be understood that the words used are words of description rather than limitation, and various changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention disclosed.



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Claims

1. A door assembly for a motor vehicle, the door assembly comprising:
 - 5 a door panel having an inner side and an outer side, the inner side being adapted to face into a passenger compartment of the motor vehicle;
 - a catch mounted on the outer side of the door panel and operable to detachably secure the door assembly in a closed position; and
 - 10 a lock mounted on the outer side of the door panel and engaged with the catch to permit selective operation of the catch.
2. The door assembly of claim 1 further comprising an exterior handle mounted on the outer side of the door panel and adapted to operate the catch.
- 15 3. The door assembly of claim 1 wherein the lock is formed as part of a lock assembly, and the lock assembly comprises a glass edge guide.
4. The door assembly of claim 1 further comprising an inner handle mounted on the door panel and adapted to operate the catch.
- 20 5. The door assembly of claim 4 wherein the inner handle is mounted in a door handle housing formed in the door panel.
- 25 6. The door assembly of claim 4 wherein the inner handle is connected to the catch by a cable.

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7. The door assembly of claim 1 further comprising a belt line reinforcement connected to the outer side of the door panel.
- 5 8. The door assembly of claim 7 wherein the belt line reinforcement comprises metal.
9. The door assembly of claim 7 wherein the belt line reinforcement comprises plastic.
- 10 10. The door assembly of claim 1 further comprising a window regulator connected to the outer side of the door panel.
11. The door assembly of claim 10 further comprising a window engaged with the window regulator.
12. The door assembly of claim 10 further comprising a motor operably connected to the window regulator.
- 15 13. The door assembly of claim 10 wherein the window regulator is adapted for movement along a generally vertically oriented member connected to the outer side of the door panel.
- 20 14. The door assembly of claim 1 further comprising means for dissipating a side impact to the door assembly.
15. The door assembly of claim 14 wherein the means for dissipating a side impact comprises foam disposed adjacent the outer side of the door panel.
- 25 16. The door assembly of claim 1 further comprising a map pocket attached to the door panel.



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17. The door assembly of claim 1 wherein the door panel includes a speaker impression.
18. The door assembly of claim 1 further comprising a wiring harness connected to the outer side of the door panel.
19. The door assembly of claim 1 wherein the door panel is injection molded.
20. The door assembly of claim 1 wherein the door panel is compression molded.
21. The door assembly of claim 1 wherein the door panel comprises olephenic thermoplastic.
22. The door assembly of claim 1 wherein the door panel comprises polypropylene.
23. The door assembly of claim 1 wherein the door panel comprises acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene.
24. The door assembly of claim 1 wherein the door panel comprises a glass-reinforced composite.
25. The door assembly of claim 1 further comprising a header attached to the door panel.
26. A door assembly for a motor vehicle, the door assembly comprising:
a trim panel having an inner side and an outer side, the inner side being adapted to face into a passenger compartment of the motor vehicle;

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a catch mounted on the outer side of the trim panel and operable to detachably secure the door assembly in a closed position; and

5 an exterior handle mounted on the outer side of the trim panel and adapted to operate the catch.

27. The door assembly of claim 26 further comprising a lock mounted on the outer side of the trim panel and engaged with the catch to permit selective operation of the catch.

10 28. The door assembly of claim 26 wherein the lock is formed as part of a lock assembly, and the lock assembly comprises a glass edge guide.

15 29. The door assembly of claim 26 further comprising an inner handle mounted on the trim panel and adapted to operate the catch.

30. The door assembly of claim 29 wherein the inner handle is mounted in a door handle housing formed in the trim panel.

20 31. The door assembly of claim 29 wherein the inner handle is connected to the catch by a cable.

32. The door assembly of claim 26 further comprising a belt line reinforcement connected to the outer side of the trim panel.

25 33. The door assembly of claim 32 wherein the belt line reinforcement comprises metal.

34. The door assembly of claim 32 wherein the belt line reinforcement comprises plastic.



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35. The door assembly of claim 26 further comprising a window regulator connected to the outer side of the trim panel.
- 5 36. The door assembly of claim 35 further comprising a window engaged with the window regulator.
37. The door assembly of claim 35 further comprising a motor operably connected to the window regulator.
- 10 38. The door assembly of claim 35 wherein the window regulator is adapted for movement along a generally vertically oriented member connected to the outer side of the trim panel.
39. The door assembly of claim 26 further comprising means for dissipating a side impact to the door assembly.
- 15 40. The door assembly of claim 39 wherein the means for dissipating a side impact comprises foam disposed adjacent the outer side of the trim panel.
41. The door assembly of claim 26 further comprising a map pocket attached to the trim panel.
- 20 42. The door assembly of claim 26 wherein the trim panel includes a speaker impression.
43. The door assembly of claim 26 further comprising a wiring harness connected to the outer side of the trim panel.
- 25 44. The door assembly of claim 26 wherein the trim panel is injection molded.

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45. The door assembly of claim 26 wherein the trim panel is compression molded.

46. The door assembly of claim 26 wherein the trim panel comprises olephenic thermoplastic.

5 47. The door assembly of claim 26 wherein the trim panel comprises polypropylene.

48. The door assembly of claim 26 wherein the trim panel comprises acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene.

10 49. The door assembly of claim 26 wherein the trim panel comprises a glass-reinforced composite.

50. The door assembly of claim 26 further comprising a header attached to the trim panel.

15 51. A structural door trim module for combining with and reinforcing an outer door panel of a motor vehicle to make a vehicle door assembly, the door trim module comprising:

20 an inner door panel having an inner appearance side and an outer side having a structural characteristic, the inner appearance side being adapted to face into a passenger compartment of the motor vehicle and the outer side being adapted to face the outer door panel; and

25 an inner door panel reinforcement mounted on the outer side of the inner door panel to provide the structural characteristic and having spaced portions adapted to interface with the outer door panel in respective spaced locations with each spaced portion being readily accessible and operable to detachably and



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structurally secure the inner door panel in an easy-on, easy-off combination with the outer door panel.

52. The structural door trim module of claim 51 wherein said spaced locations are on opposite sides of said inner door panel so that said spaced portions of said inner door reinforcement are more readily accessible when securing the inner door panel in combination with the outer door panel.

53. The structural door trim module of claim 51 including a lock mounted on the outer side of the inner door panel for selectively locking and unlocking the outer door panel with respect to the motor vehicle when the inner door panel is secured in combination with the outer door panel, said lock being sufficiently adjacent to one of said spaced portions of said inner door panel reinforcement that said lock is readily accessible and operable to detachably and structurally secure said lock in combination with the outer door panel in one of said spaced locations when the inner door panel is secured in combination with the outer door panel.

54. The structural door trim module of claim 53 wherein one of said spaced portions of said inner door panel reinforcement is configured substantially normal to said inner door panel adjacent said lock to cause said one of said spaced portions in one of said spaced locations to interface with a peripheral portion of the outer door panel when both the inner door panel and the lock are secured in combination with the outer door panel.

55. The structural door trim module of claim 51 including a window pane frame and a window pane regulator affixed to said inner door panel reinforcement

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and operable to move said window pane in and out of said window pane frame.

56. The structural door trim module of claim 51 wherein said inner door panel reinforcement is configured to resist crash loads impacting the motor vehicle.

57. The structural door trim module of claim 51 wherein said inner door panel reinforcement is configured to form a door pull support when the inner door panel is secured in combination with the outer door panel.

10 58. The structural door trim module of claim 51 including a lock mounted on said inner door panel reinforcement and having a handle for operating said lock, said handle adapted to extend into an exterior hand grab position through the outer door panel when
15 said inner door panel is secured in combination with the outer door panel.

59. The structural door trim module of claim 53 including a door handle connected to said lock and an interior door handle recess on said inner door panel
20 reinforcement between said spaced portions for receiving said door handle on said inner appearance side of said inner door panel to provide reinforcement for said door handle when said inner door panel is secured in combination with the outer door panel.

25 60. The structural door trim module of claim 51 including a water management system covering the outer side of said inner door panel between said inner and outer door panels when securing the inner door panel in combination with the outer door panel to inhibit the



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introduction of water, noise and dust into the passenger compartment.

5 61. The structural door trim module of claim 60 including a flange on the inner door panel reinforcement and a belt line glass seal attached to said flange as part of said water management system.

10 62. The structural door trim module of claim 60 including electrical devices on said outer side of said inner door panel, and wherein said water management system is a sheet configured to conformingly seal said electrical devices.

15 63. A vehicle door assembly for a motor vehicle comprising an outer door panel having a peripheral flange defining an opening, and a structural door trim module insertable into said opening and having a plurality of electrical components testable and adjustable before said door trim module is inserted into said opening, said door trim module having:

20 an inner door panel having an inner appearance side and an outer side having a structural characteristic for the vehicle door assembly, the inner appearance side being adapted to face into a passenger compartment of the motor vehicle and the outer side facing the outer door panel; and

25 an inner door panel reinforcement mounted on the outer side of the inner door panel to provide the structural characteristic and having spaced portions at least one of which interfaces with the peripheral flange of the outer door panel and with each spaced portion being readily accessible and operable to detachably and
30 structurally secure the inner door panel in an easy-on, easy-off combination with the outer door panel.

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64. The vehicle door assembly of claim 63 wherein said peripheral flange extends between said inner door panel and said outer door panel.

5 65. A method of assembling a vehicle door for a motor vehicle comprising:

providing an outer door panel with a peripheral flange having a first flange portion substantially normal to said outer door panel and a second flange portion spaced from said first portion and substantially parallel to said outer door panel,

10 forming a structural door trim module comprising an inner door panel having an inner appearance side and an outer side having a structural characteristic, said inner appearance side being adapted to face into a passenger compartment of the motor vehicle and said outer side being adapted to face the outer door panel;

mounting an inner door panel reinforcement on the outer side of the inner door panel to provide the structural characteristic of said inner door panel, and

20 forming spaced reinforcement flange portions on said inner door panel reinforcement adapted to interface respectively with the first and second flange portions on the outer door panel,

25 positioning said structural door trim module adjacent said outer door panel so that said first reinforcement flange portion is readily accessible and interfaces with said first outer door panel flange portion and said second reinforcement flange portion is readily accessible and interfaces with said second outer door panel flange portion and,

30 detachably securing said structural door trim module to said outer door panel by fastening each of said reinforcement flange portions to a respective outer

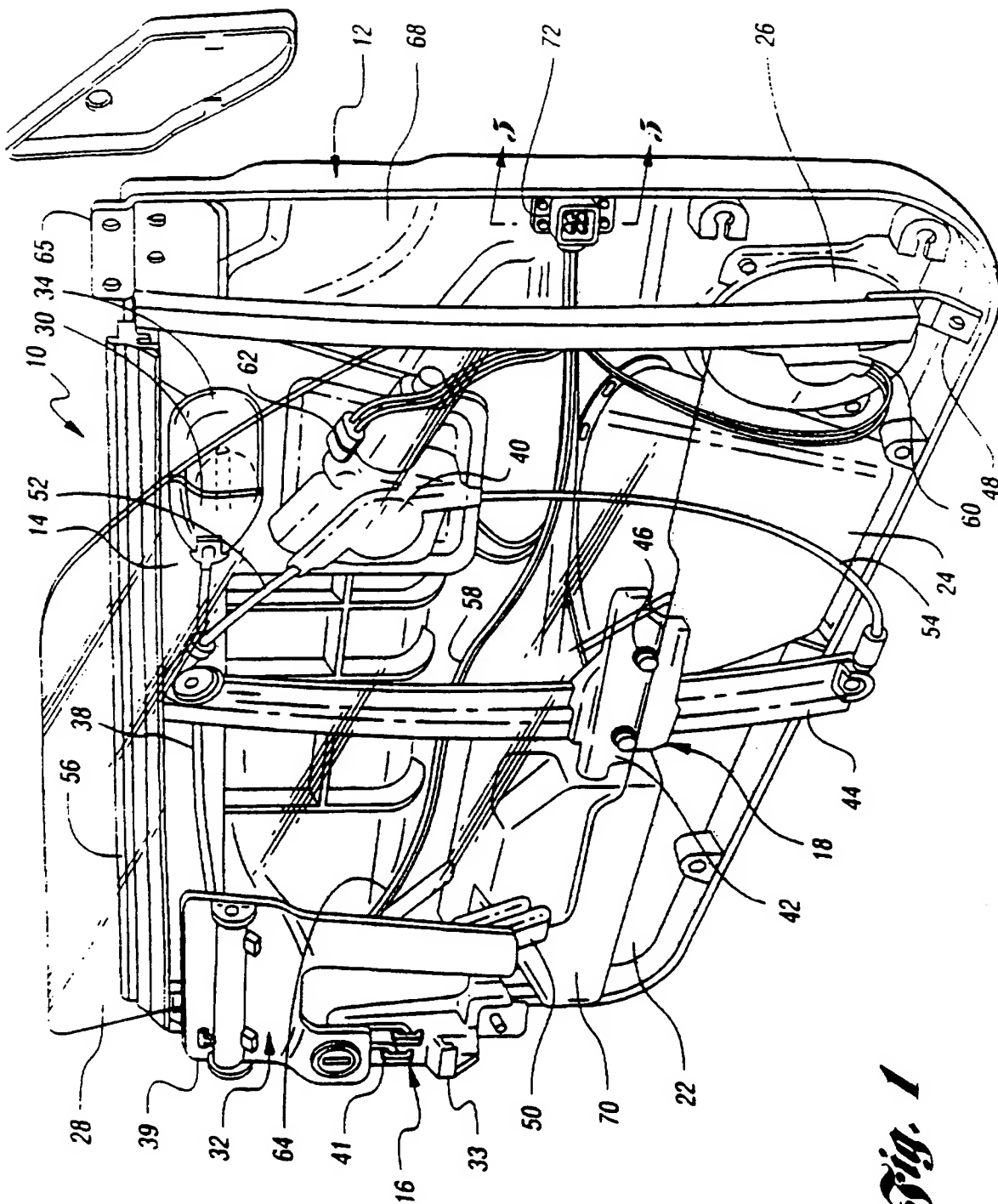
-25-

door panel flange portion whereby to reinforce said outer door panel with said structural door trim module.

66. The method of assembling a vehicle door of claim 65 including:

- 5 installing as a part of said structural door trim module an electrical component on the outer side of said inner door panel and sealing said outer side and said electrical component with a watershield before said structural door trim module is positioned adjacent said
- 10 outer door panel whereby to shield said electrical component and the passenger compartment of the vehicle from the deleterious effects of water, noise and dust.

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**Fig. 1**

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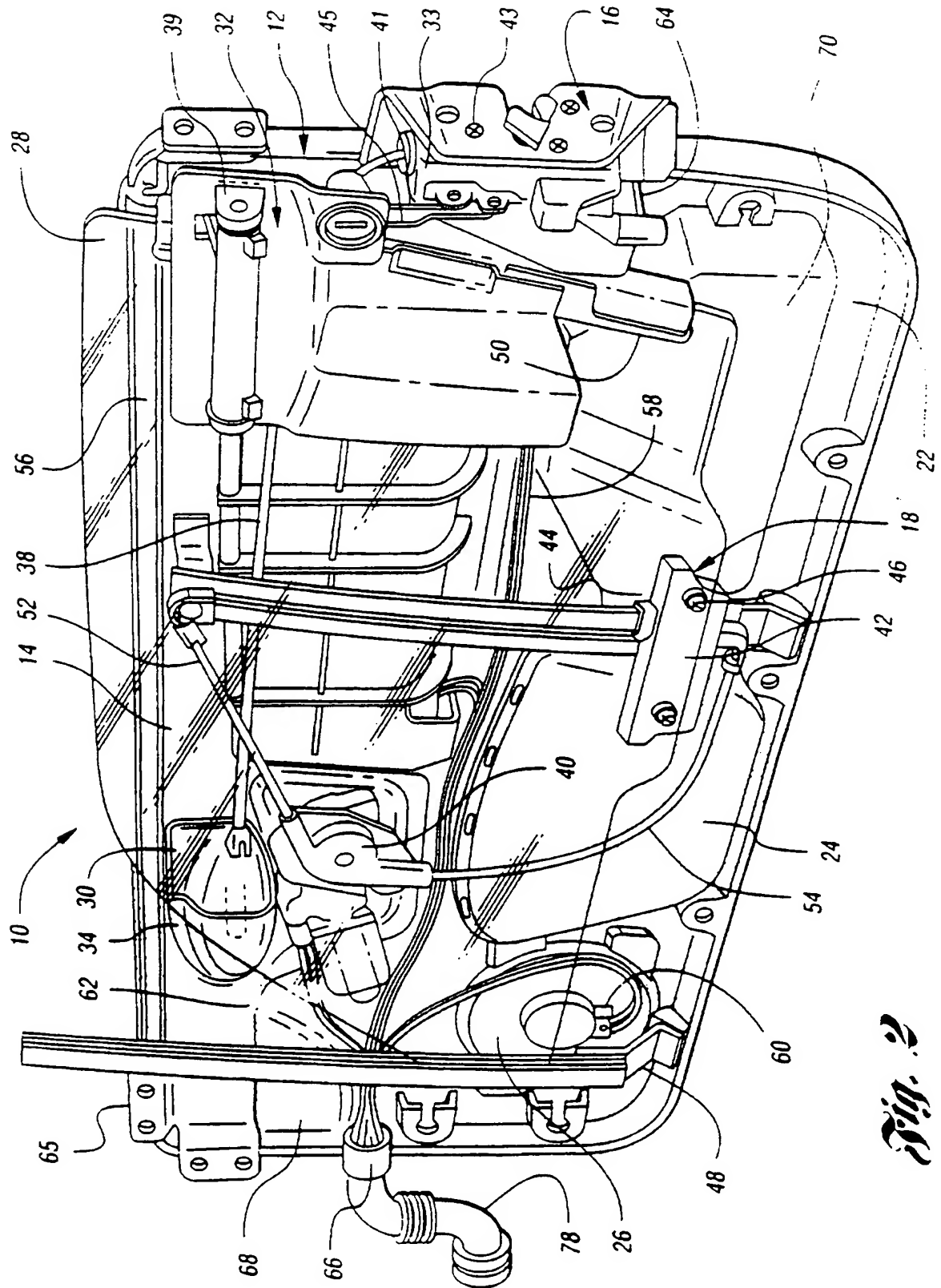


Fig. 2

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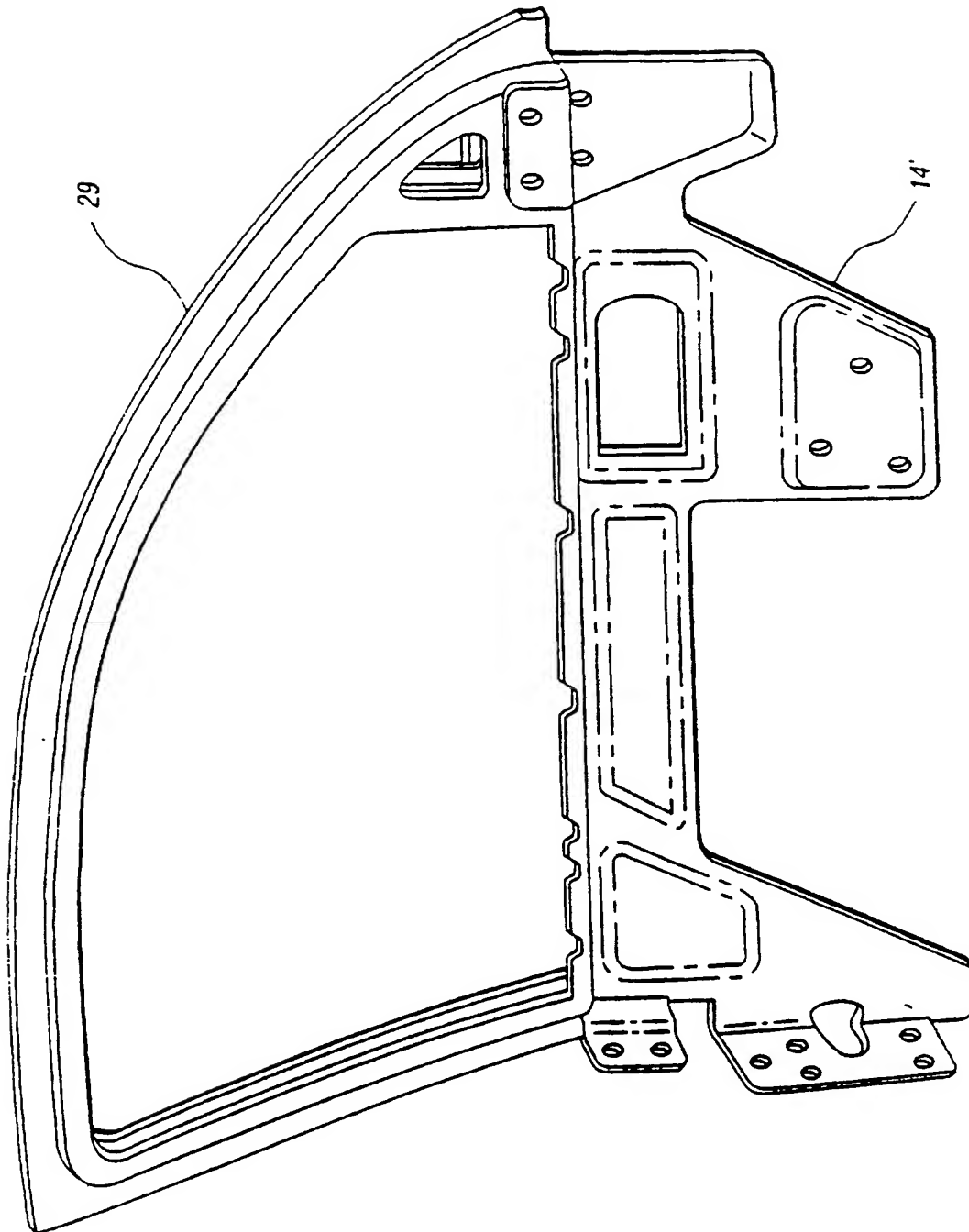
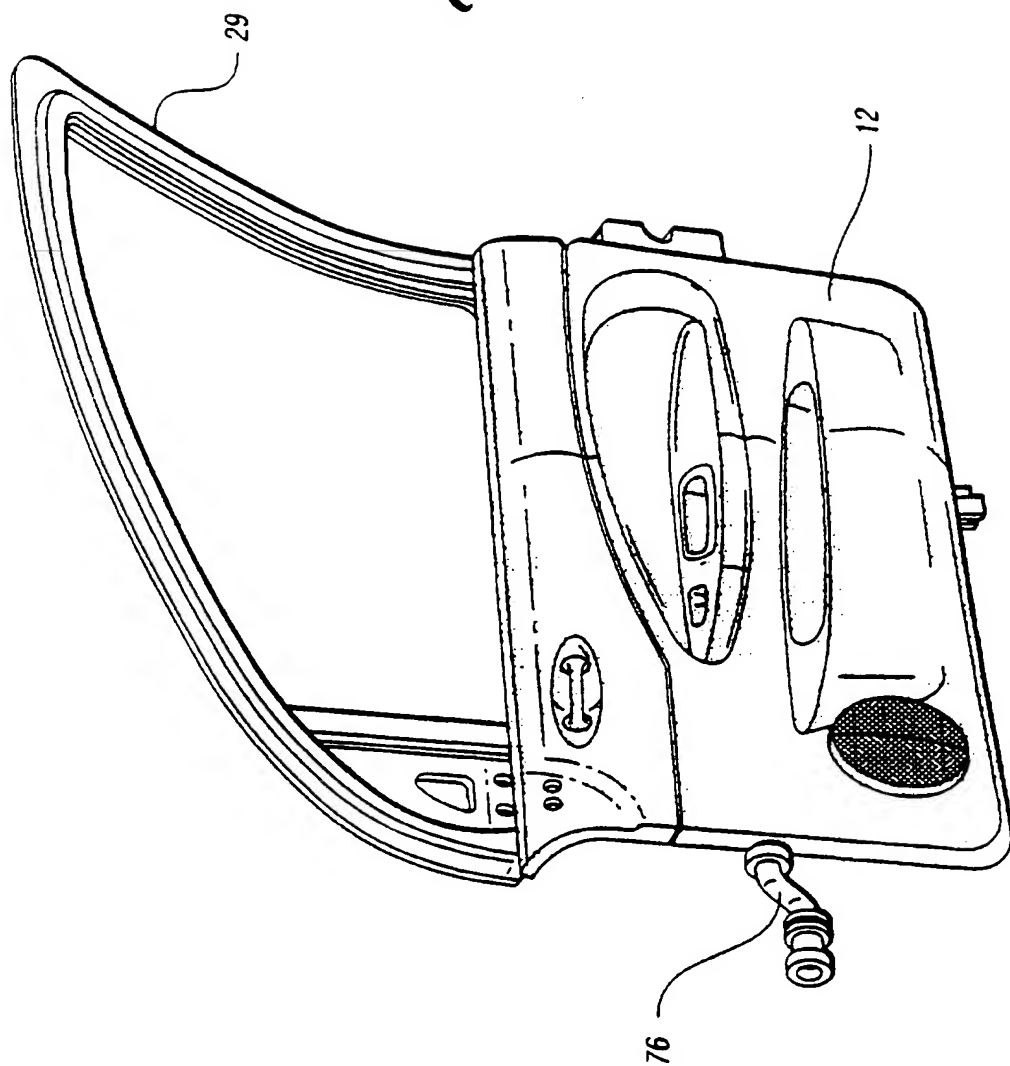
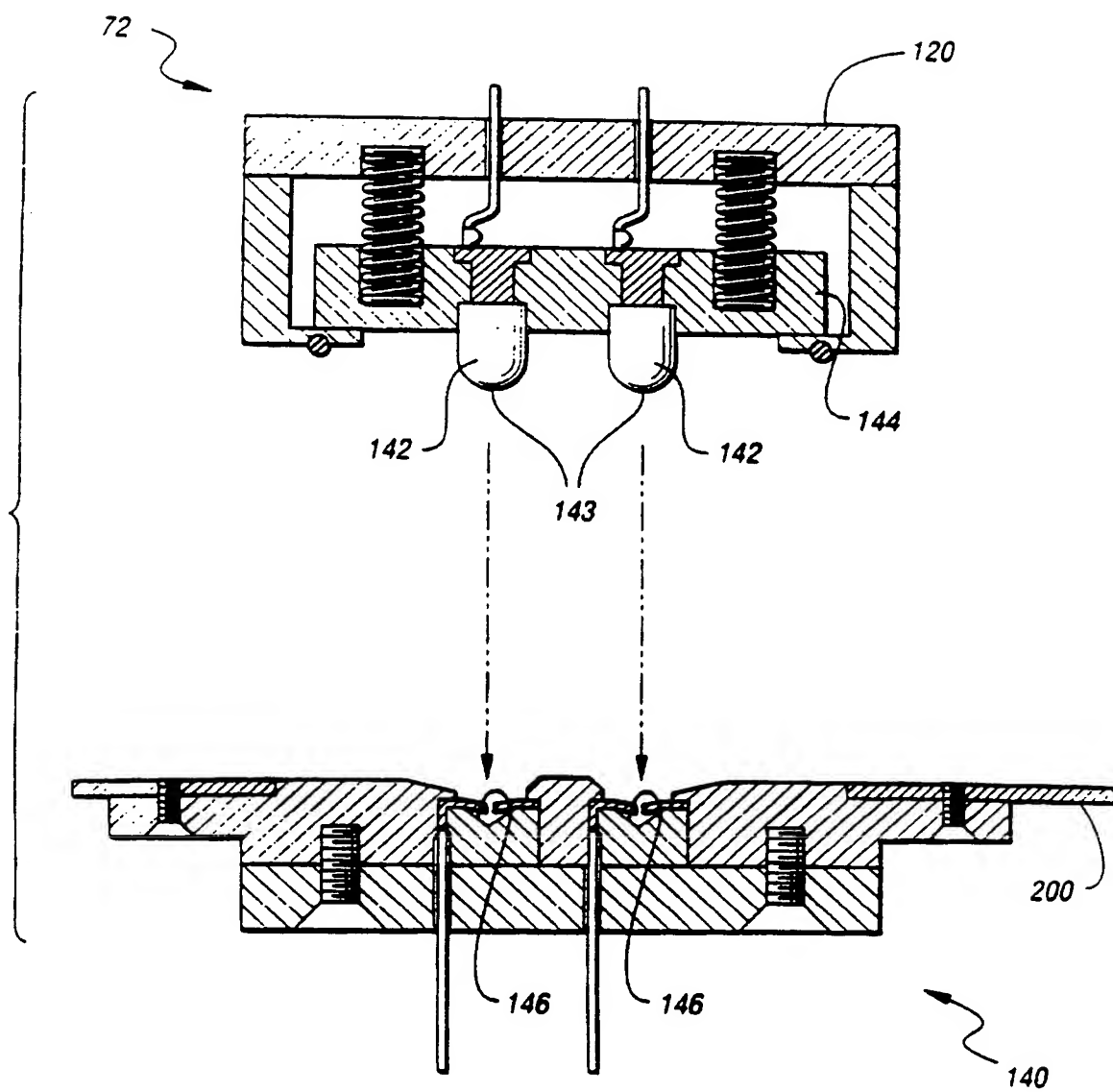


Fig. 3

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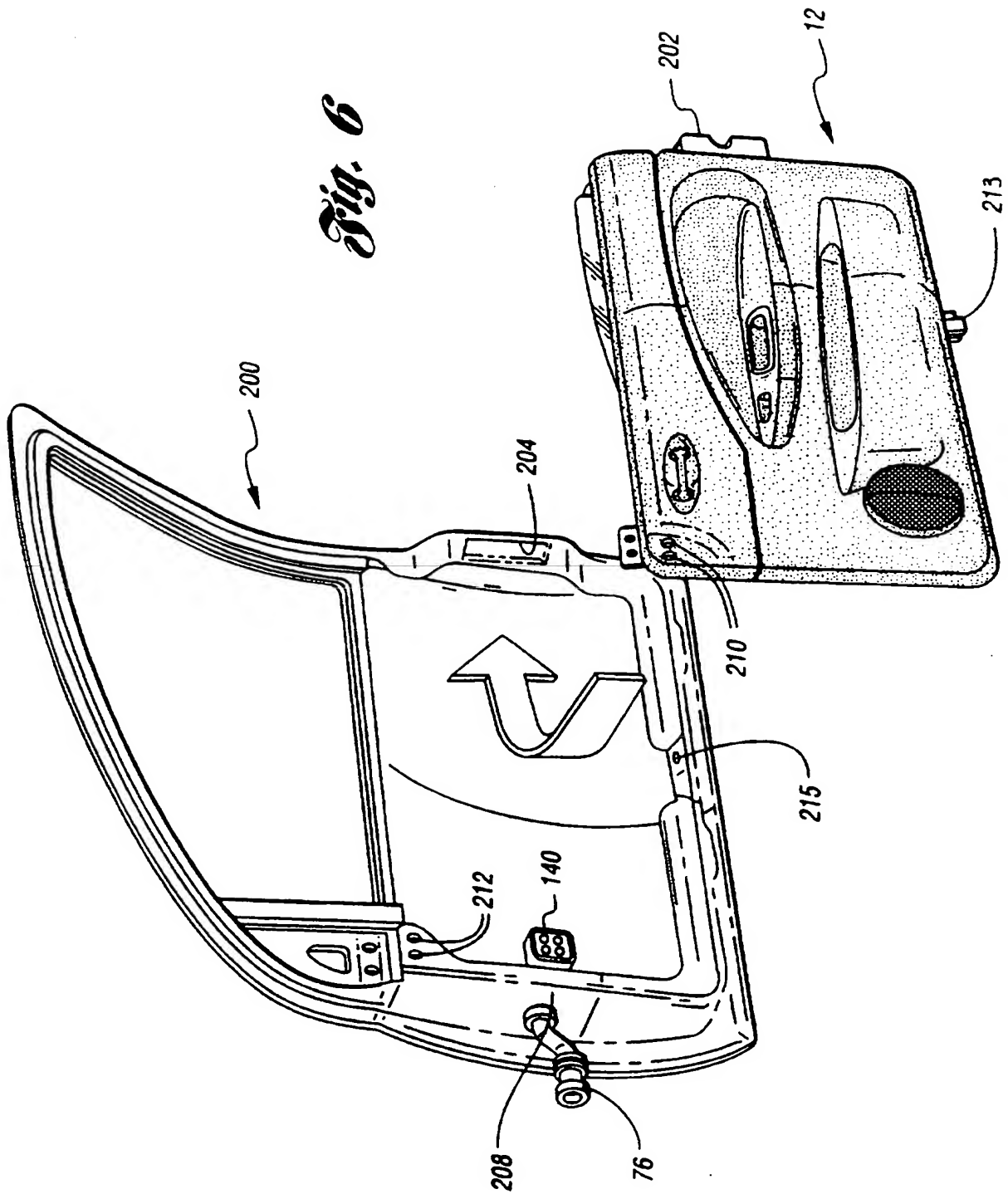
Fig. 1

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*Fig. 5*

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Fig. 6



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Fig. 7

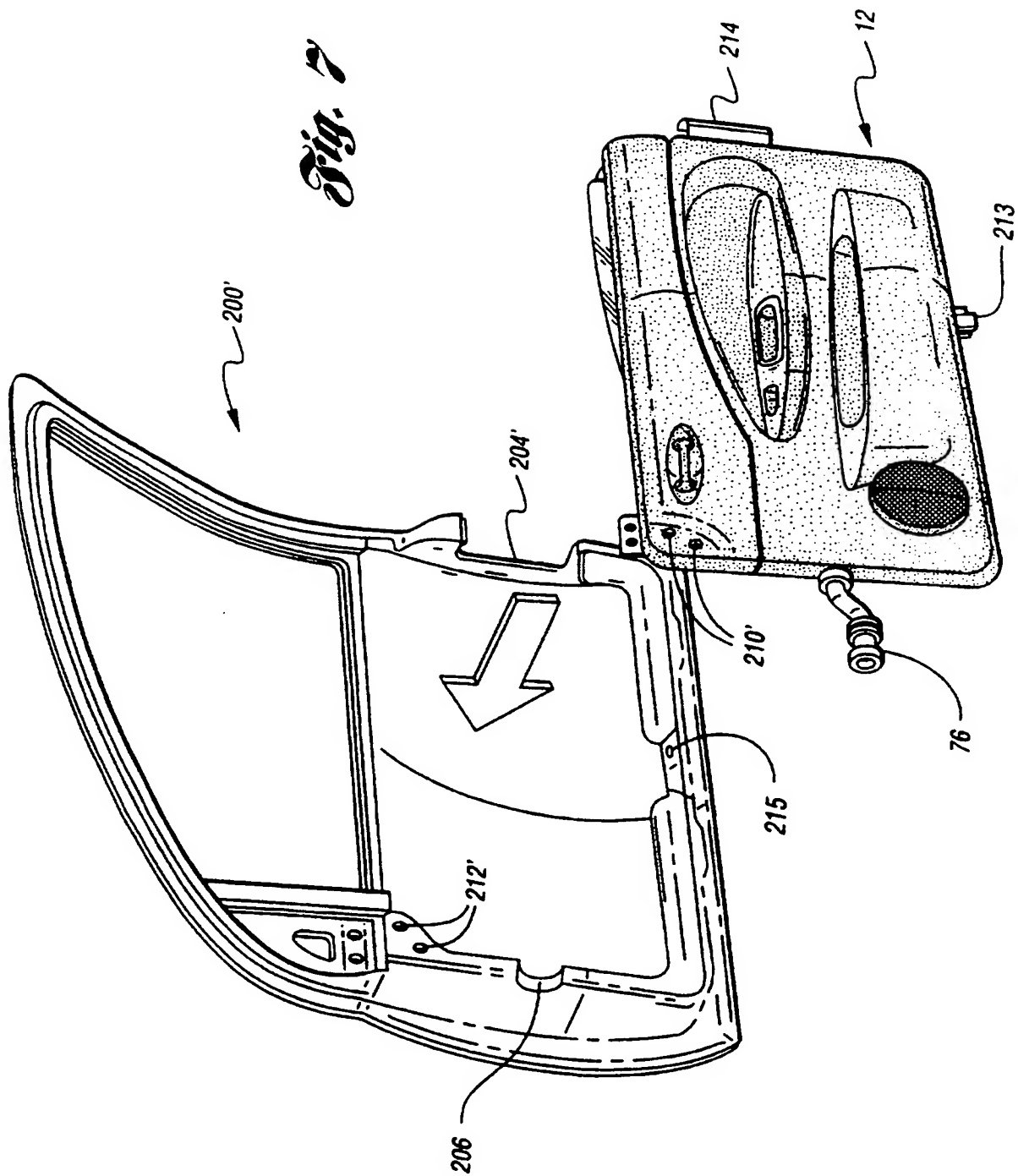
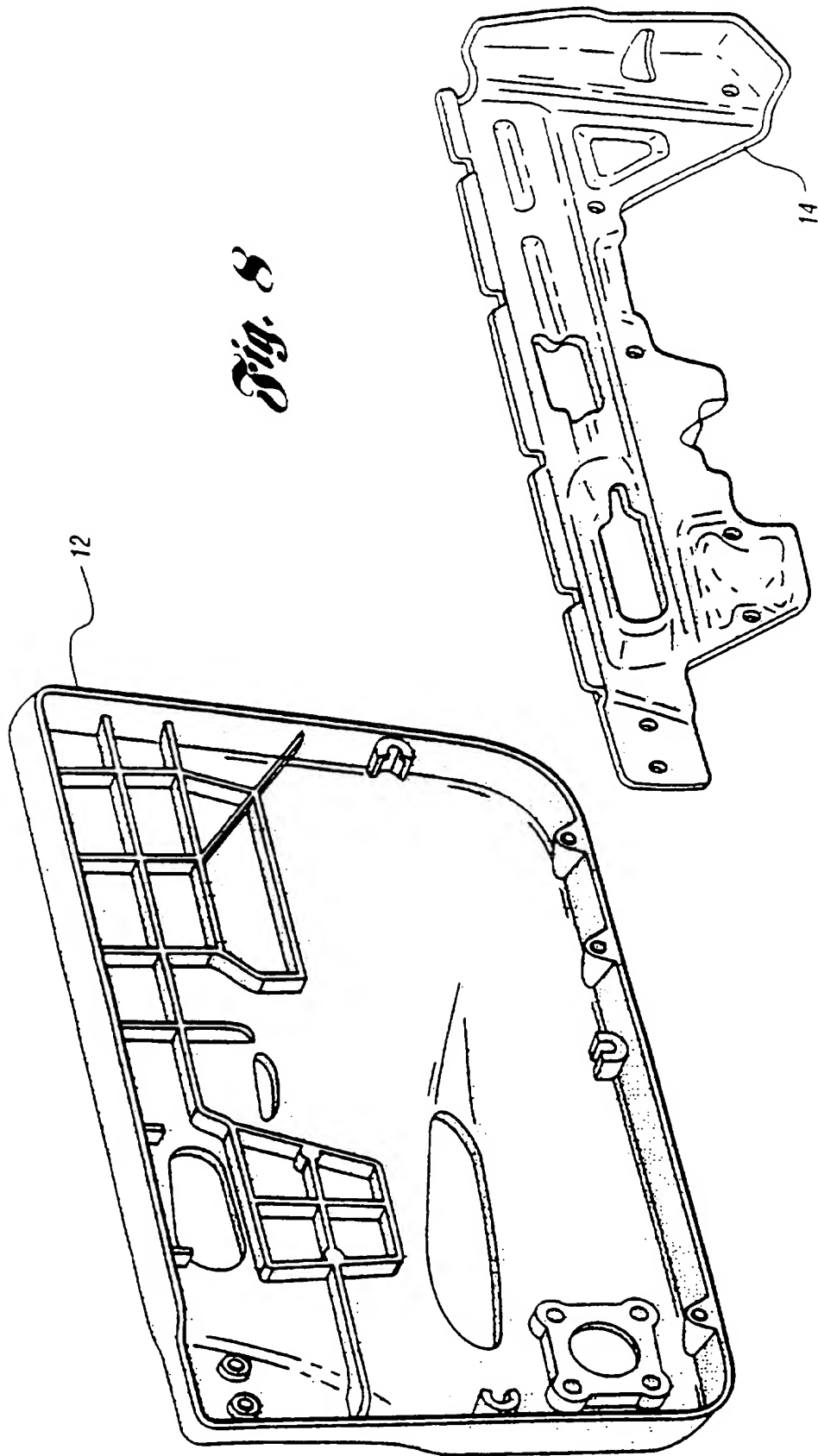
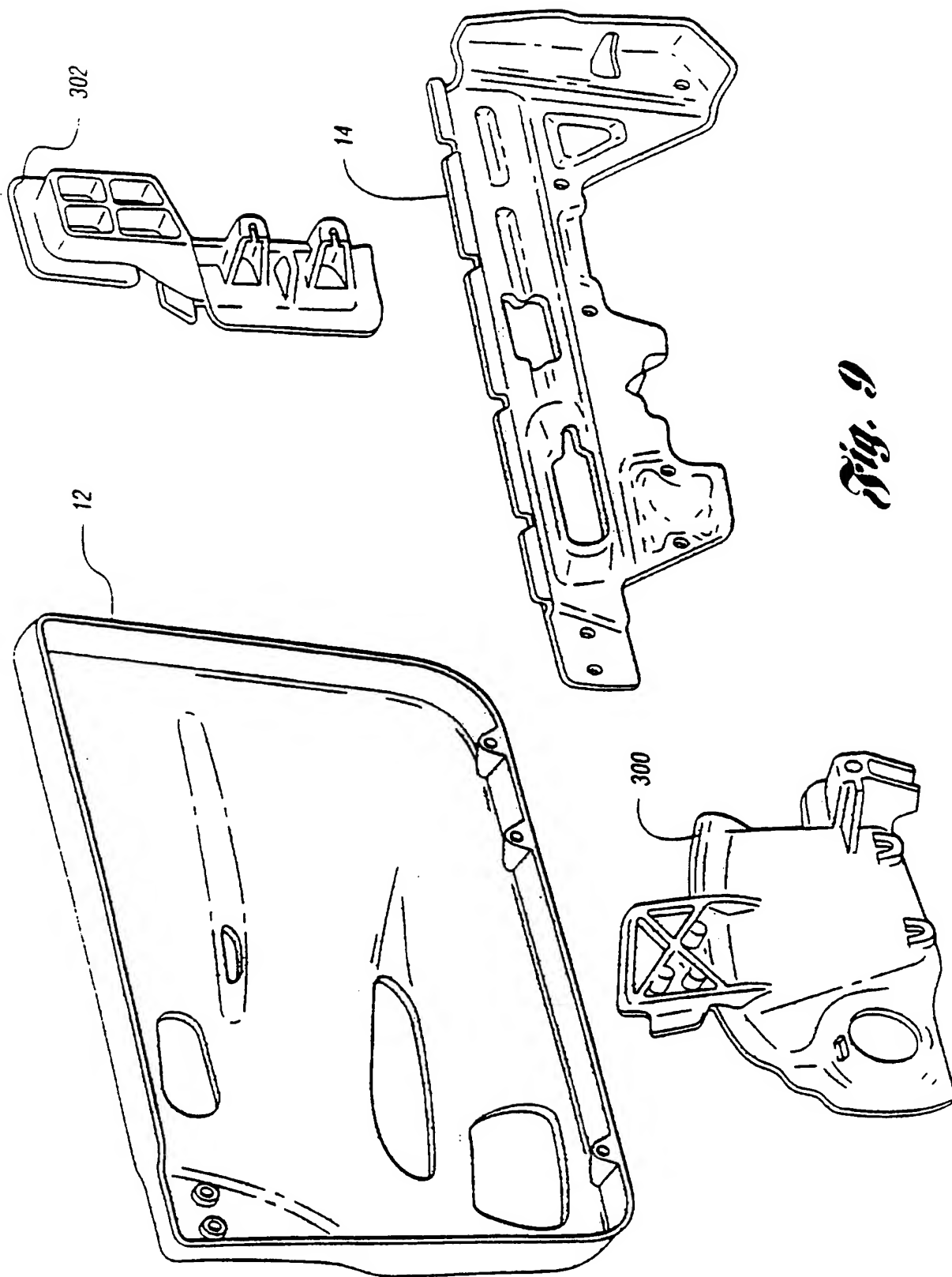


Fig. 8



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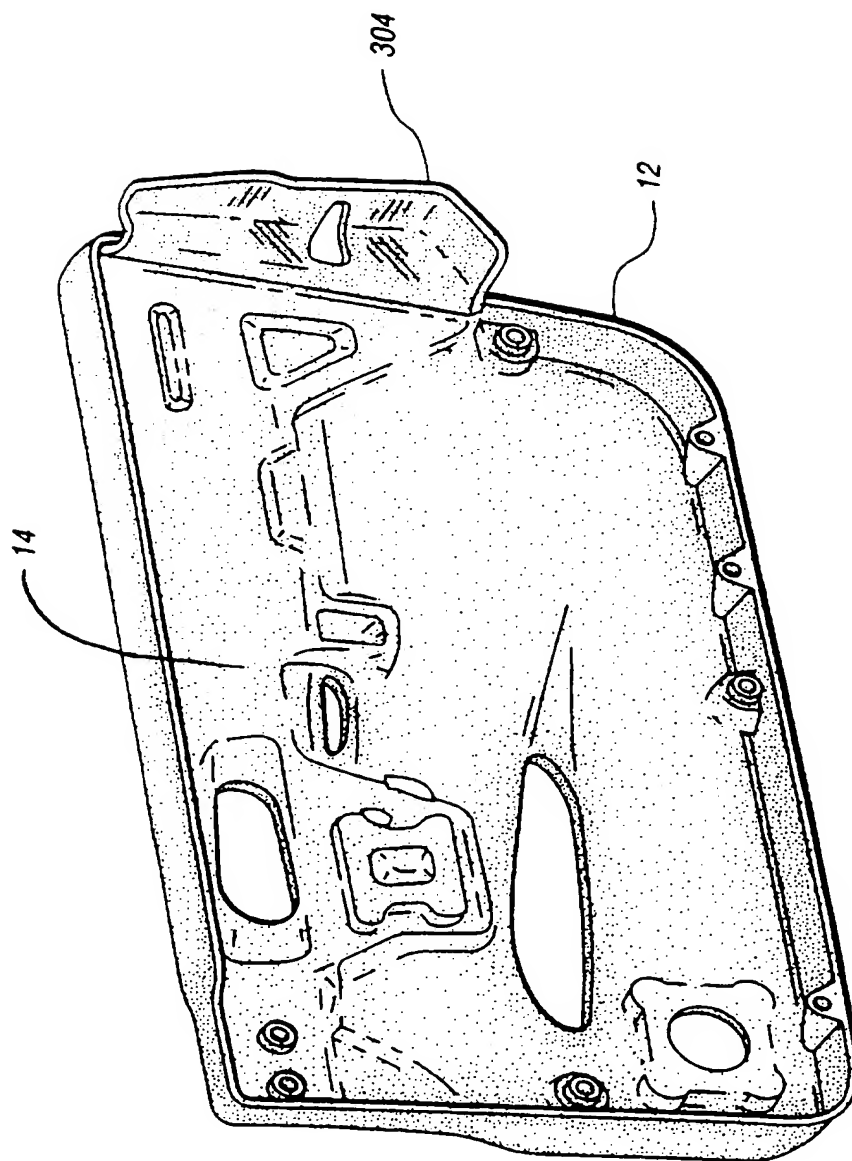


Fig. 10

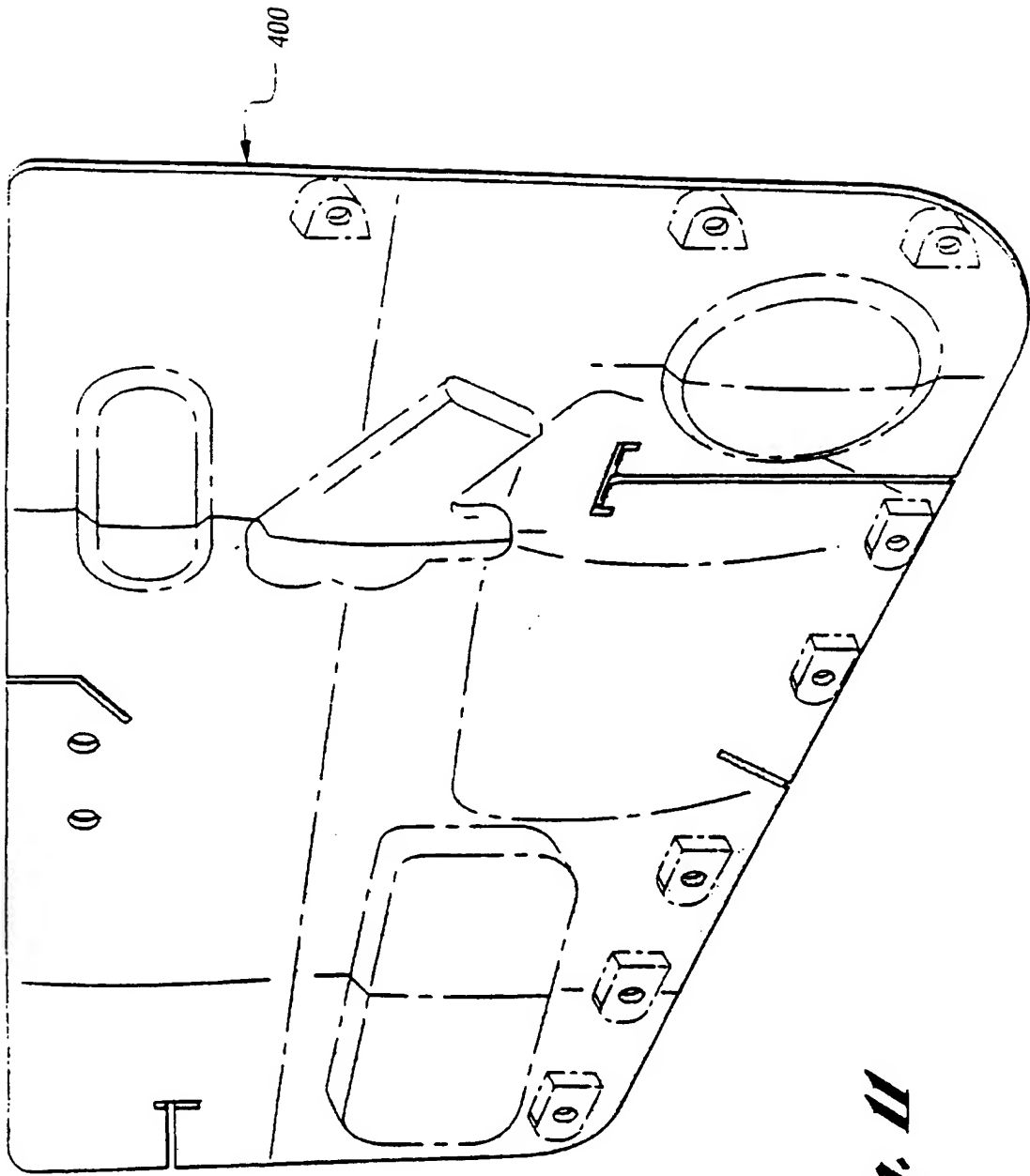


Fig. 11

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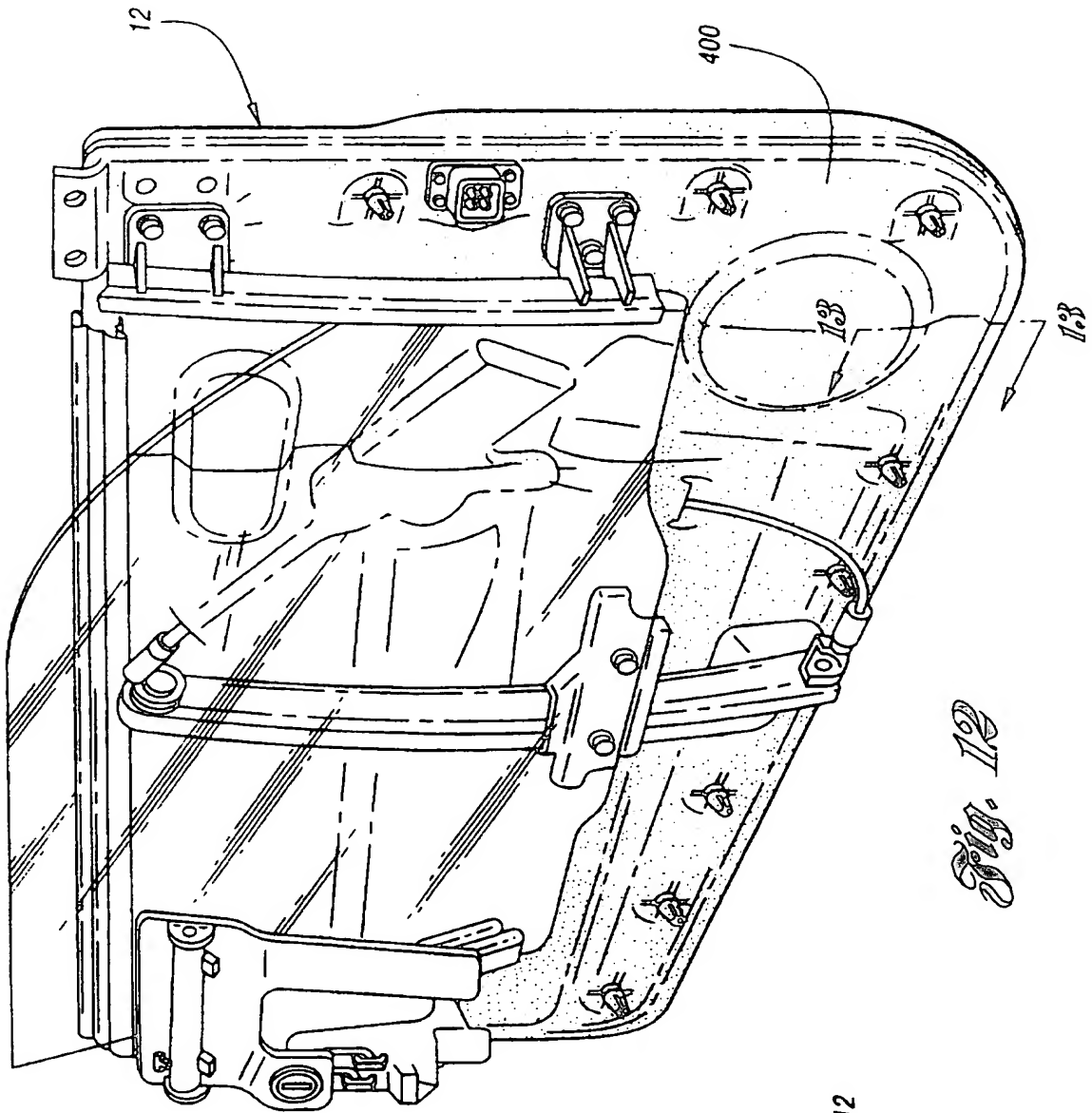


Fig. 12

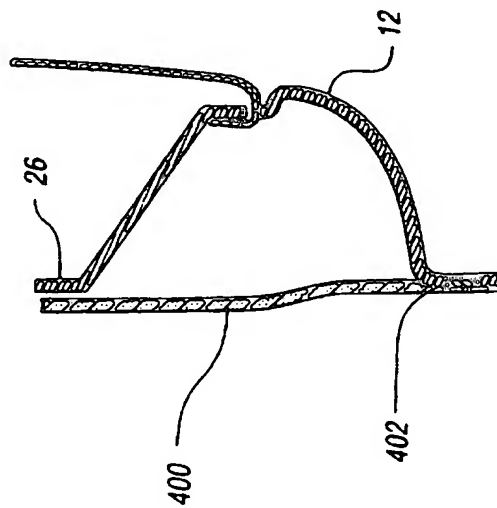


Fig. 13

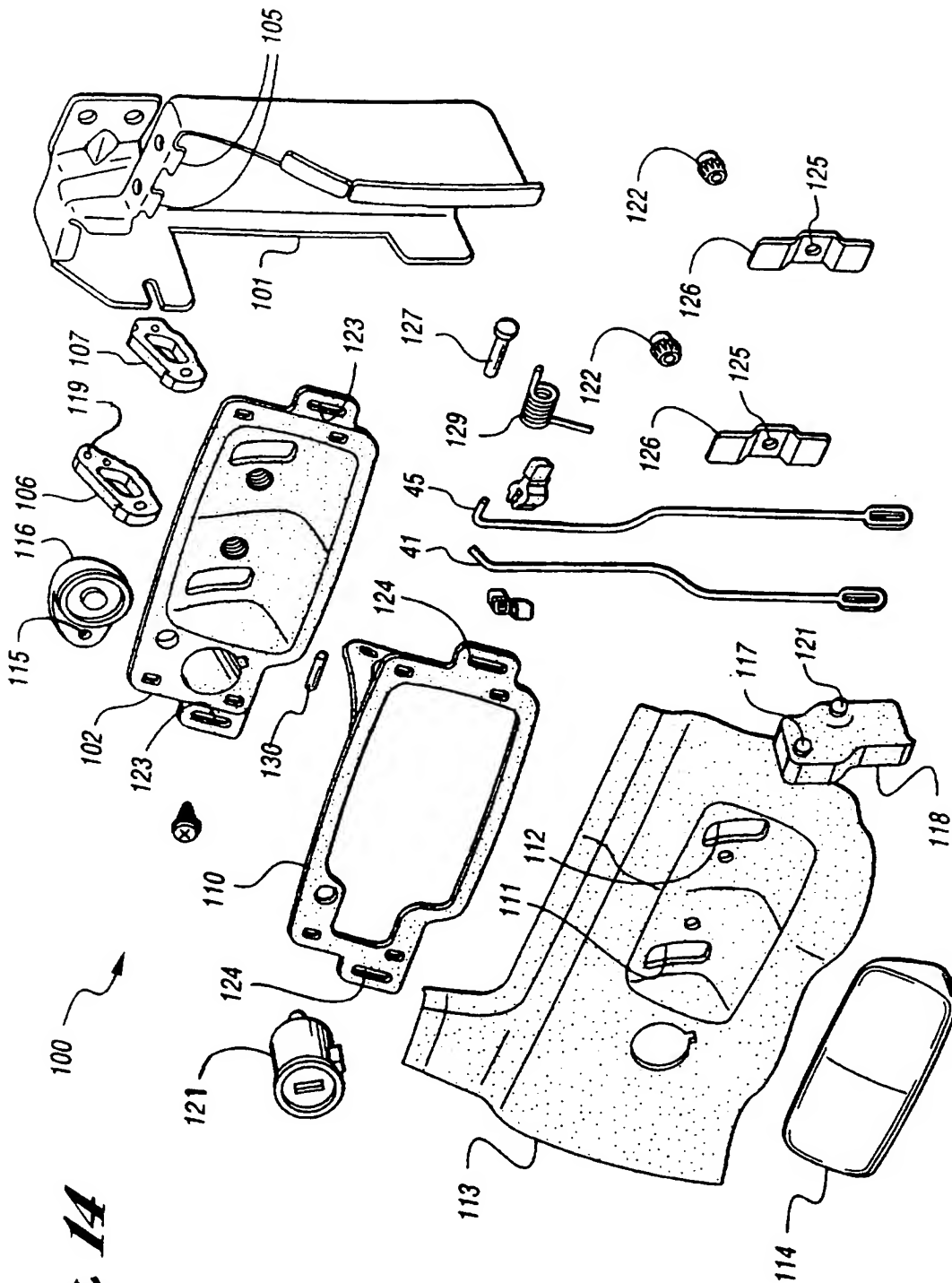


Fig. 14

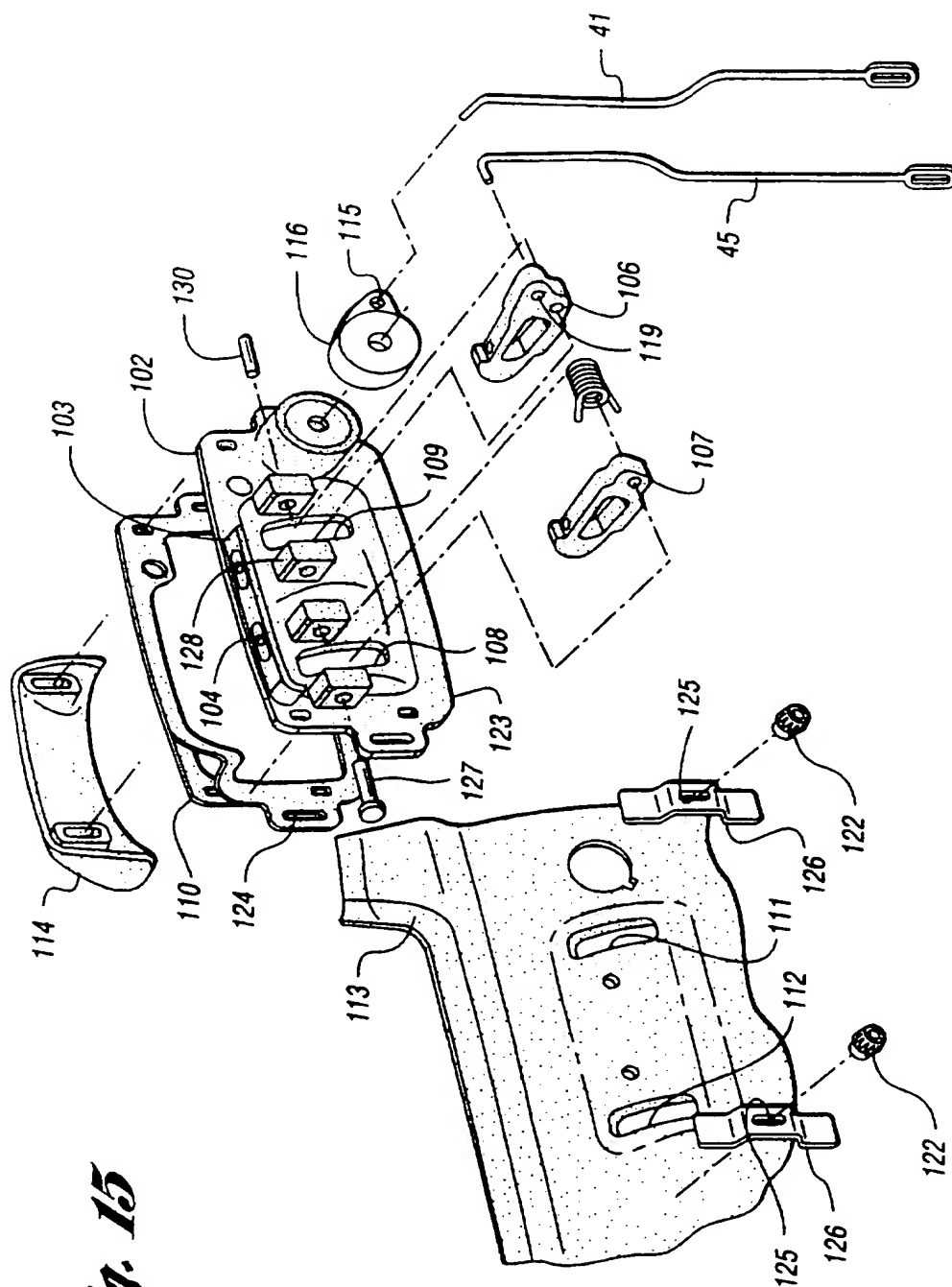
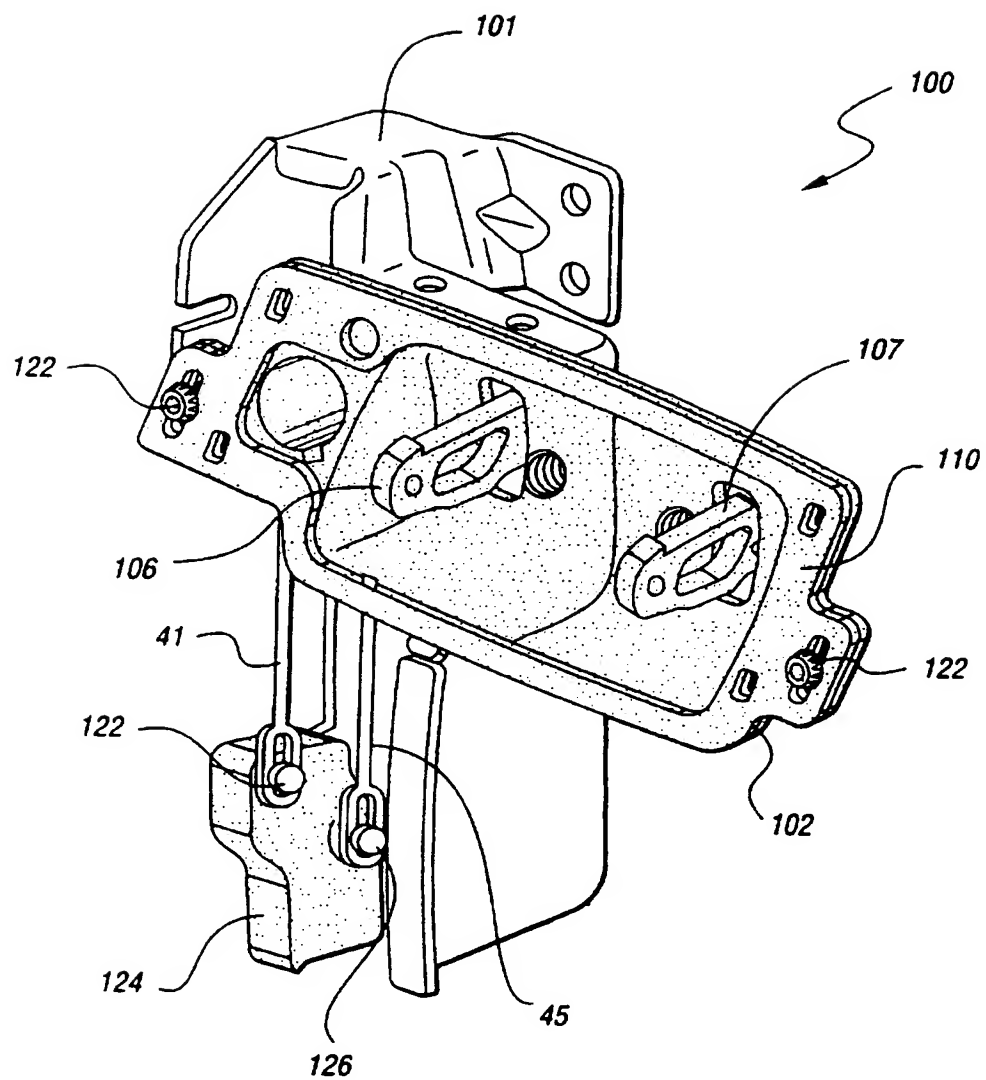
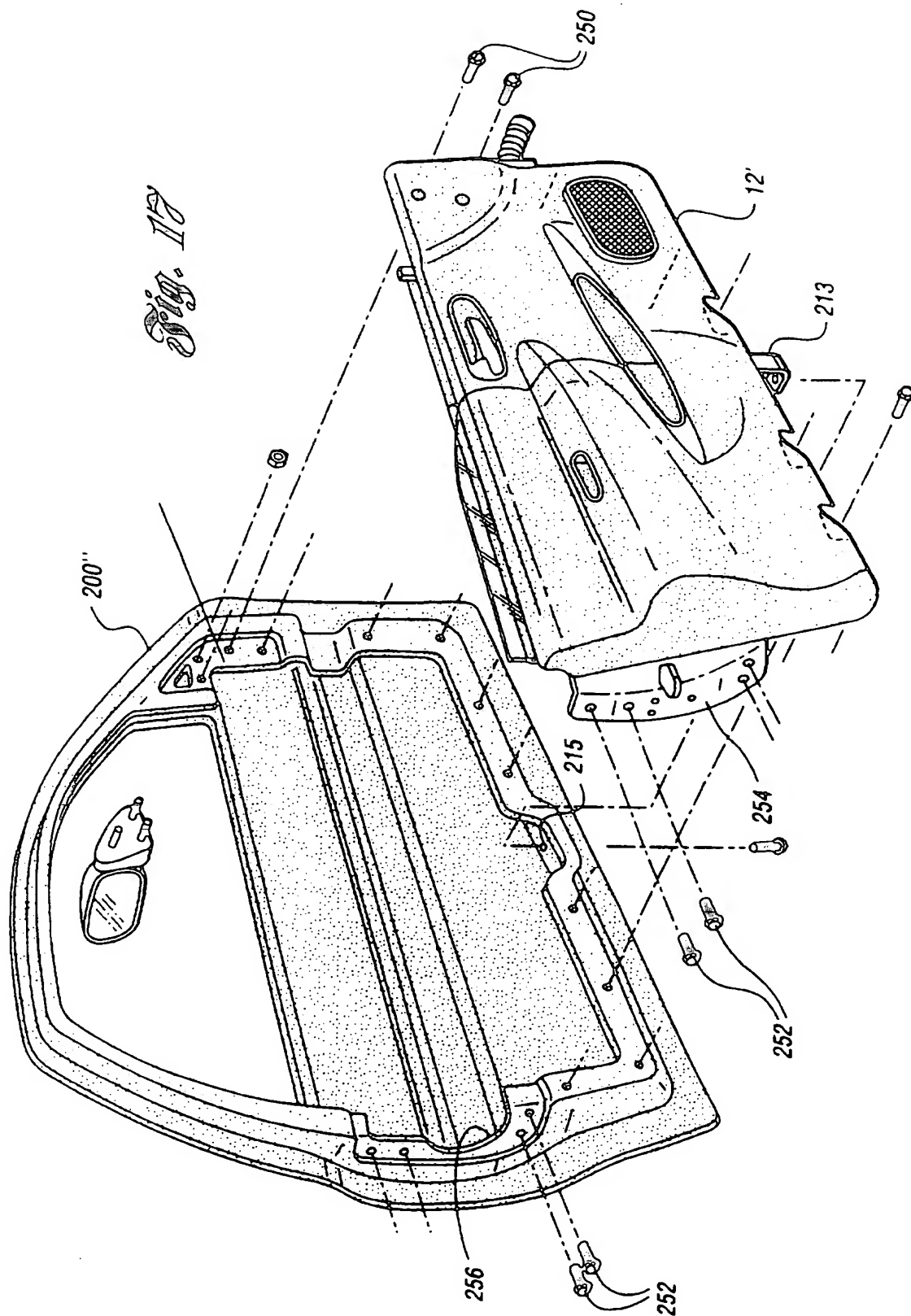


Fig. 15

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*Fig. 16*

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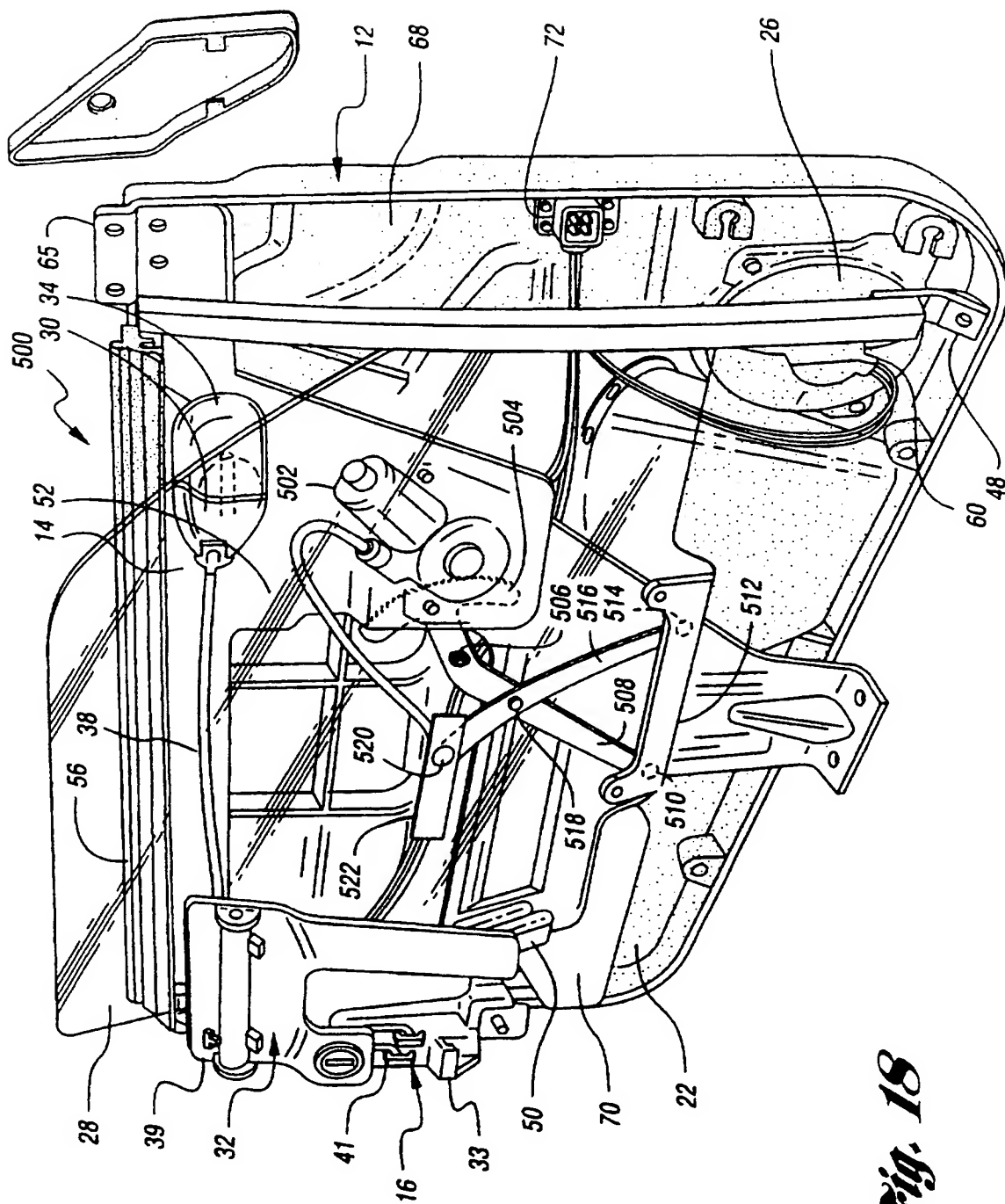


Fig. 18

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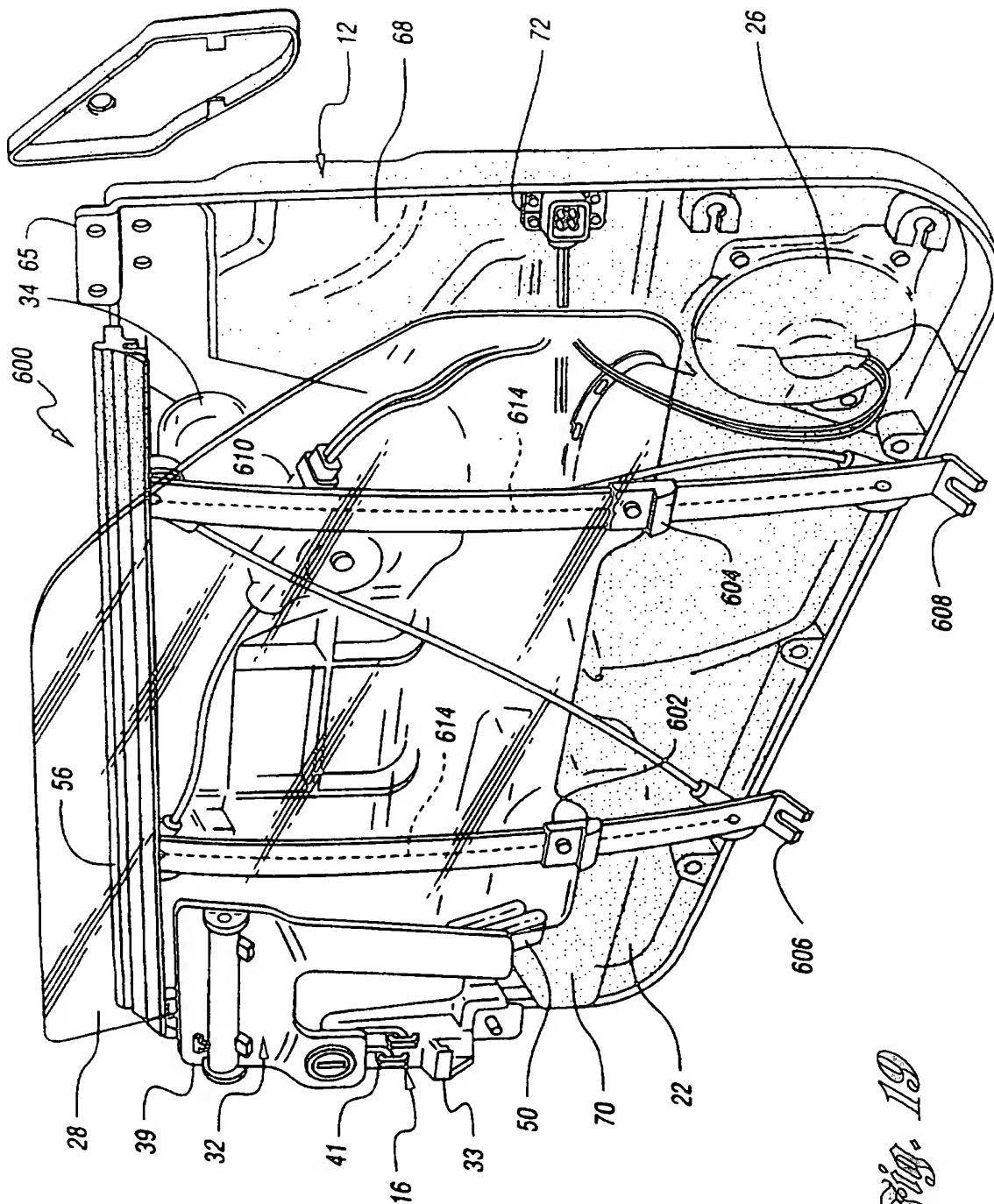


Fig. 19

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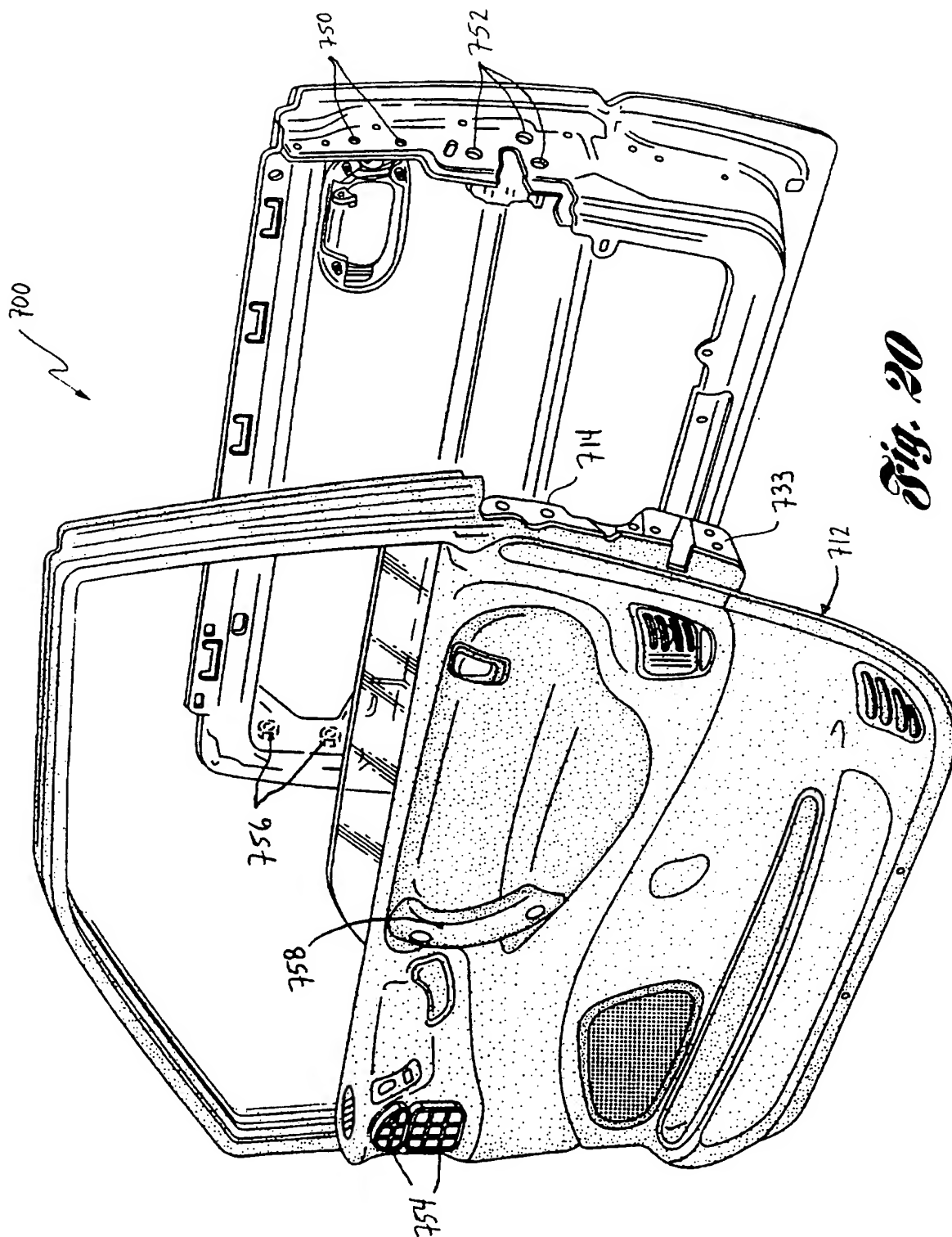
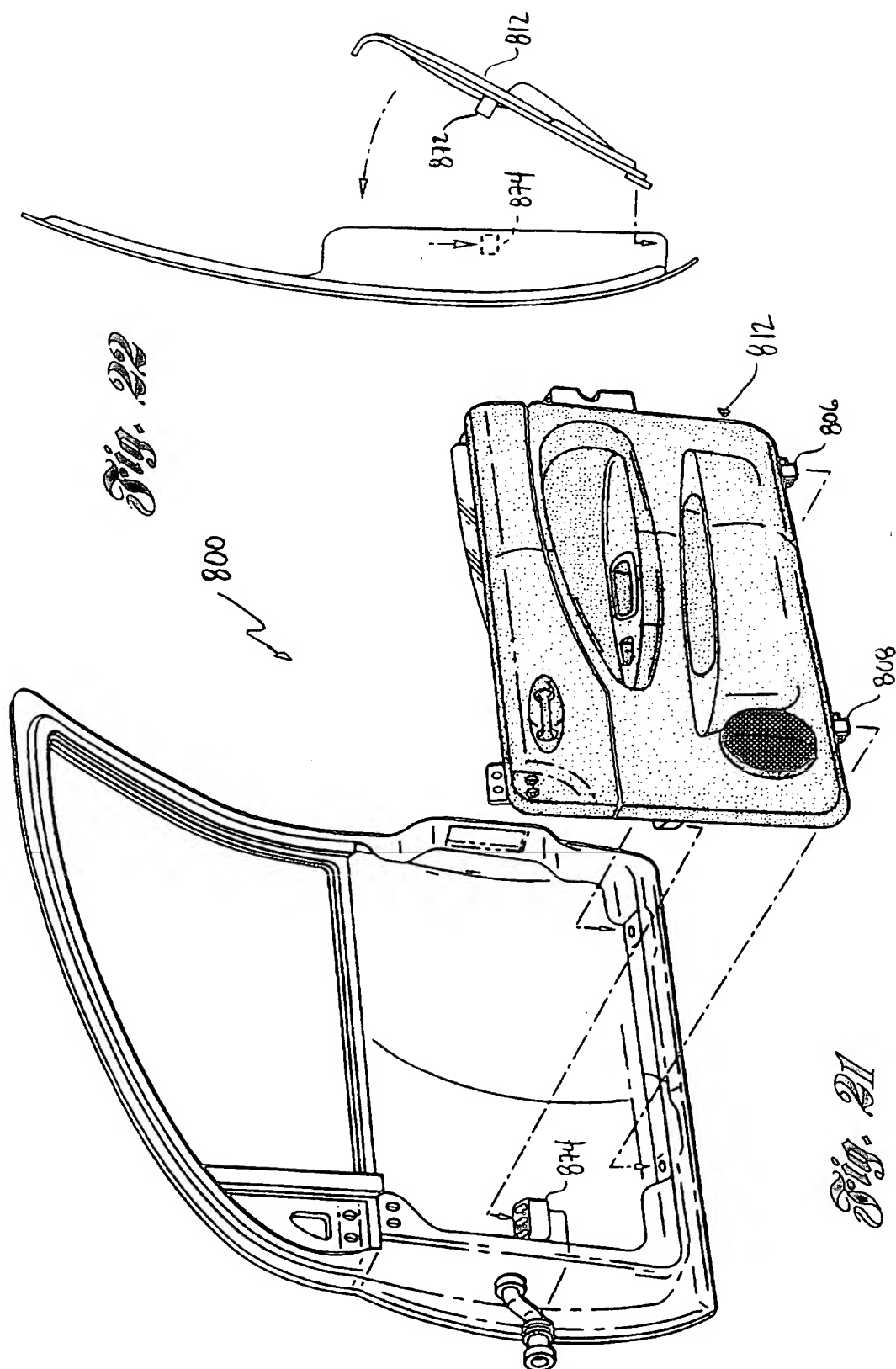


Fig. 20



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/US 97/09594

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 B60J5/04

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 6 B60J

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	EP 0 712 746 A (GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION) 22 May 1996 see column 2, line 54 - column 7, line 38; figures	1,2,4,5, 10-12, 17-19, 26,27, 29,30, 35-37, 42-44, 51,55, 60,62, 63,65
P,X	WO 96 28314 A (BROSE FAHRZEUGTEILE) 19 September 1996 see page 11 - page 13; figures -/-	1

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

15 October 1997

Date of mailing of the international search report

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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A	WO 92 05011 A (STILLBACK) 2 April 1992 see page 8 - page 9; figures ---	1
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Information on patent family members

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